

Pending BOE Approval

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: September 23, 2019
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: Lecture Hall, Watertown High School

Members Present: Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Ms. Diane Bristol
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

Members Absent: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Ms. Cheryl Albino

Others Present: Dr. Rydell Harrison –Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager
Mr. Jordan Arnold – Student Council Representative

A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

B. Salute to the Flag

C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

D. Minutes

Agenda Item: D.1
Subject: Minutes of the September 9th, 2019 Regular Board of Education Meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion:	Mr. Chair, I move that the Board approve of the minutes from the September 9 th , 2019 Board of Education meeting as presented by Ms. Davidson.
Discussion:	None
Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion passed

E. Report from Student Council Representative – Jordan Arnold

Mr. Arnold - Mrs. Meka, from **John Trumbull Primary School**, reports that the staff was invited to meet with principals during minutes with Meka and Galik for the 5th year in a row. During the meeting positive things were shared as well as what could be worked on.

Ms. Scully, from **Judson**, reports that their open house/book fair/ice cream social was last week. This Friday there will be a STARS assembly where students will be introduced to “Start With Hello” which is a program developed by Sandy Hook Promise. Start with hello activities raise awareness and educate students about the importance of being more socially inclusive and connected to each other at school.

Ms. Fekete, from **Polk**, reports about two student recognition programs: Polk Perks and School Families. Students get recognized for following school expectations, and then they receive tickets for Polk Perks. When students earn Polk perks they put them into their classroom container, and when the container is filled the class earns a reward of some sort. Once the class bin is full, they get to put their perks into a school bin, where the whole school can earn a special reward. “School Families” is where an adult in the building and other students from different grade levels, meet and do fun activities that build community and civic mindedness. It gives students the opportunity to make strong connections and interact with others of different ages, including adults.

Ms. Lurz, from **Swift**, reports that their Open house was last week where Dr. Harrison presented the district Strategic plan several times throughout the evening. This year's open house was different with students being encouraged to join with their families as part of one of their parent goals, designed to encourage closer ties between school and home.

The students are in the process of completing the I-ready language arts and math test. Over the next few weeks, Mrs. Fekete is scheduled to work with teachers to support them in implementing the I-Ready data for both classroom instruction and intervention.

Ms. Parlato, from **Watertown High School**, reports that their open house was well-attended. At the open house they had a presentation for the 9th grade parents in order to provide an overview of what the high school offers. So far there has been 15 Good News calls and families are delighted to receive positive news. Lastly, teachers participated in professional learning last week, where they reviewed the Theory of Action, student survey data, and began the social emotional learning, intelligence, and understanding.

F. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report**1. Appointments – (Information Only)**

Ms. Bryanna Murphy to the position of Title 1 Tutor at Swift Middle School, effective September 6, 2019 at a rate of \$16.00 per hour.

Ms. Amy Scranton-Slattery to the position of District English Language Learner (ELL) for Watertown Public Schools, effective September 23, 2019, at an hourly rate of \$25.00.

2. Transfers– (Information Only)

None

3. Resignations – (Information Only)

None

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Harrison– Good afternoon Board members and good evening everyone. You will see in your report we have two appointments to report; the first is Ms. Bryanna Murphy to the position of Title 1 tutor and the second is Ms. Amy Scranton-Slattery to the position of District English Language Learner. We are excited to have those positions to meet the need of our district and students. Tonight I wanted to take a moment to discuss the work we have been doing with our Continuous Growth Plan. As you know, we just launched a District Improvement Plan that contains our Vision of a Graduate, our Strategic Plan of 2022 and our Continuous Growth Plan really looking at our systems and operations. Last week, Mr. DiStasio and I had the opportunity to meet with other Superintendents and representatives from EdAdvance with whom we are sharing a human resource specialist position. It was a great opportunity for us to talk about what is working in our district, and how she will, in her role, be able to better establish items related to HR specifically related to onboarding. In relationship to systems and operations, we have been receiving lots of feedback from the community related to our district website. We launched a new website this past June and we are still working out many of the tweeks. Mr. Turner and I met and had a lengthy conversation looking at our district website and also our plan for working with our webmasters across the district to standardize some protocols with the contents on the websites. We are making sure we are able to address those issues in a timely manner and think about how we continue to make improvements to that. The last piece of continuous improvement that I want to highlight is that today was day one of TregoEd training for all of our administrators. We spent the morning in this room with a trainer that came in from North Carolina who today, taught the first of four processes, around decision making, strategic thinking, and collaborative planning. I think these are tools that will serve us well in the future and will help us to make more collaborative, transparent and defensible decisions about the direction that we are going individually in our schools, and then collectively as a district.

G. Discussion Regarding the School's Success Plan

Dr. Harrison – I am really excited to talk about our School Success Plan. You will remember that last year I gave an overview of the success plans just talking about individual plans that we have at each of our schools to address specific areas of improvement or areas of growth at each of the schools that the principals and their teams have identified. This year our plans are just a little bit different in that they are aligned to the large, three strategic plan goal areas which are Watertown Cares, Watertown Learns and Watertown Leads. Within each of those there are two focus areas; there are the climate goals and the student support goals with a focus on students and staff, partnerships, and a focus on families. Three of the goals from each of the plans are consistent from school to school. Those are the goals that I presented to you several years ago when I brought the strategic plan to you for approval, so I just wanted to remind you of those goals. With our Watertown Cares goal is our biggest objective with our focus on climate. By the end of this school year, 100% of our administrators and teachers will have a comprehensive understanding of the four anchors of the RULER program. That is already a focus that has started. Mr. Brown has been meeting with our implementation team at each of our schools. In addition to that, each school will develop their own with a focus on support, and I will not go through each of the schools' goals but I wanted to highlight a couple of things. At Judson and Polk, they are focusing on differentiating instruction through the SRBI system of support. And what that does is, it gives opportunity to look at how are we screening where are students are academically, socially, behaviorally, emotionally, and then putting in interventions in place to meet those needs. In many cases when you have a focus, with something like SRBI, there often is a lot of focus on tier two or tier three students and in both schools they are looking at tier one. What is it we are doing for all of our students to meet their needs? So that is a couple of examples where that is happening at that level. For Watertown Cares, we had a common goal with a focus on professional learning for our teachers. Last year we started work around four high impact instructional strategies and we will continue that work building our teachers capacity to use research and instructional based strategies to meet our students' needs. As far as individual goals that are at each school focusing on students; at Swift they are focusing on content standards. Looking at the level of rigor in all of our classrooms, working with one of our district consultants that is coming in and doing some work with teachers and administrators and building on that professional learning to really change what that student experiences in the classroom related to content standards. In relationship to our focus on our partnerships, we have a district wide common goal between all of our schools establishing three new partnerships by the end of this school year and looking at ways to connect with those partners to open up opportunities for our students to learn. To learn about career opportunities, we have our college and career fair coming up at the high school, but also exposing them to other career paths at lower grade levels. When it comes to the individual goals related to parent engagement, I was really excited about what we are doing at all of our schools where they are using our family data survey from last spring to really identify what some of those focus areas are. Prior to this meeting, we had our Community Engagement meeting where we were able to look at a lot of that data and one of the things that I mentioned was that you would be able to see the ties from some of that data to the goals and so at both Judson and Polk they are looking at improving the understanding around standards based grading with relationship to how it is reported on the student's report card. When we are looking at the work at the high school, they have been doing a lot of work around connecting with the parents, sharing information, even just some little things related to it with things like the "Good News Calls", small ways to engage families. At Swift, continuing to improve communication between the school, community and

families. One of the things we will be doing in relation to this area is collecting online resources and creating a space at John Trumbull for us to try out or practice some of this collection of resources and engaging parents in accessing some of these online tools. I asked Ms. Meka to work with Mr. Turner to look at ways we can get some metrics around parents using those online resources. I think that will give us some good information about the big picture about where we are going as far as establishing a parent resource center, either virtually or in person. So, as always, I am really excited about the individual work that is happening at our schools. There are action steps related to each of these focus areas; one thing that I have shared with all of our principals is that we expect there will be tweaks and changes throughout the year but with any kind of improvement plan should be able to document, but I think it's really the hard work on the front end that is a testament to our principal's dedication and their teams' dedication to improving the overall culture and climate and student learning outcomes and teacher growth, families and participation at the individual schools and for us collectively as a district.

H. Presentation – Safe School/Climate

Dr. Harrison – Tonight we will be talking about our school safety plans in Executive Session and that is not public information, as you can imagine we would want to keep that close to the vest, however, I thought it would be nice to talk about some of the work we have done, doing, or plan to do related to safety across the board. I want to start with some of the previous safety improvements that we have made in the past. Over the past years with grants and collaboration with the town, we have increased the number of surveillance cameras at all of our schools, installed a penetration resistance vestibule, which the film we have on the glass, where individuals on the outside can't see to the inside, we upgraded the solid core doors, electronic locks, entry door buzzer systems, scan card systems, panic alarms and real time operable communications with the police department. We increased the number of two way radios and these are things that have changed our practices and the ways we think about safety at our schools. You will remember in February we adopted a new suicide prevention policy, so we are not only thinking when it comes to safety it's not just about physical safety but also the emotional and mental health of our students safety for our students and so we adopted the new policy where it was reviewed at each of our schools and I was here at the high school when the administrative team went through the process with each of our teachers and thinking about the ways we report information if there is a concern. Last year we initiated the Every School, Every Day program in collaboration with the police department and I am excited to have Dep. Chief Bernegger with us tonight representing the Watertown Police and representing the partnership we have with them. In all of our schools there is a police officer that visits every day and this is a great way to promote positive relationships between the police department and our students and it ensures that the police familiar with the layouts of our schools, which is invaluable information in the event of an emergency, and provides additional safety at each of our schools. Last year in the budget, we budgeted for some safety and security improvements related to additional people and we put into our budget an additional resource officer for Swift and an armed resident security officer to support our elementary schools and also an additional school psychologist at our primary school to meet the social/emotional needs of our primary school students. So I am happy to introduce two of them tonight who are here, the first is Off. Chris Donston, who is with the Watertown Police Department, and our new SRO at Swift Middle School. He has jumped right in; Ms. Lerz has shared ways he is engaging with students, building relationships, all of that great work, and recognizing that it is not just during school hours, but

he has been present at after school events, there to meet parents at open house and I think he is a great addition to not only Swift, but a great addition to us as a Watertown community. We had a school safety meeting last week with all of our administrators, the central office staff, the police chief, deputy chief, the two school resource officers, our fire chief and fire marshal to talk about all things safety. We talked about things to improve and focus on and I think that was day 9 of Off. Donston's time on the job and he had a lot of things to say. That will be great for us and will help us move forward with the safety agenda. I am also excited tonight to introduce Det. Chip Schofield who is our security officer. He is very soon retiring as a detective with the Naugatuck Police Department. Friday is his last day and will start with us on Monday. We are excited to have him. I can't begin to tell you how many people reached out to me on his behalf to say what a great addition that he will be to us in this district working with our elementary students. Throughout the course of his career, he has also worked as a resource officer and so having been in that position he understands the unique role of providing security and building relationships with students and so we are looking forward to having him get started. Again, we will be talking more with our elementary school principals about what the schedule looks like, but again, along with our school safety plans, those are things we need to keep close to the vest. Because he is providing support to all three schools, we want to make sure that there are no predictable patterns that anyone could exploit and make our kids unsafe. I think he will be a great addition to our elementary schools and to us as a district, and again, with thinking how we are focusing on safety. Tonight I asked Ms. Fekete to come and share a little bit about some of the things that we do on a daily basis. While I still have her in the school's, I thought it would be great to have a principal's perspective to show that it is not something we are only thinking about on the night of a meeting, but something we think about all of the time.

Ms. Fekete – We have several common structures that are the same across of our schools with respect to safety. We all have a locked and secured building, we have the ability with our cameras to see things in live time, or see the exterior or interior of the building, you can rewind to see if you can determine exactly what happened. All of our buildings use the EVisitor Pass System; when people are buzzed into our building we take a photo and they have a personalized badge that they wear which expires after a certain amount of time. It allows us to track who is in our building because it saves the data and it saves the picture for us, so if they come again, their picture is already stored there and it helps us to recognize that it is indeed the same person. Each of us has a similar building safety plan using a common template, although there is some customizations within each of the buildings, the basic template is the same. So if you move from one school to the other or the police officers needed to move from one school to the other, the template is similar. Each of us has student safety plans for students with medical, psychological, or physical needs and those are crafted and updated once a year as well so if a student has a special need, they have their own safety plan as well that is located in several spots in our building in case of an emergency. Each of our schools has a "go bag" that is filled with many supplies and things that may be necessary if we ever have to evacuate. Many of our students have individual go bags; we have a lot of students, even at the elementary level, that are able to self-carry with their medical needs. So we have individual students' go bags either in the classroom or some of them do self-carry their medications. Each of our schools has a paper census book and there are multiple copies. In the event that you have to leave the building, you have several documents that will help you with the contact information. There are several versions of the census book that you can take with you should you have to make contact with families. As a matter of fact, there was a bus accident for a Polk, and I grabbed the census book, it was the first time I had ever used it, but it was there, I grabbed it, I went to the site, and a

father did come to pick up their child and I was able to look up the census sheet, ask him for his name, ask him for his license. That book is a great resource to have and grab when you need it. All of our spaces in all of our schools are equipped with emergency folders that have many documents in them, but one of the most important ones is the flip book. It does a really nice job of summarizing the emergency procedures. It is a nice way, if something were to happen that you could just flip and it is a bulleted list, versus the denseness of the documents that you will approve tonight. Each of our schools has a sit school security and safety school climate committee and an incident command structure, again, should there be an emergency, it will be spelled out in our plans who the go to people are in the building, and then of course, we follow all of the drill requirements through the Watertown Fire Department, which is the ten fire drills per year, with up to three of them being practice lockdowns. These are clearly not all of our procedures, but it a good overview of some of the things we have across the schools.

Dr. Harrison – Ms. Fekete talked about what we are currently doing, and I want to spend the last part of this discussion just highlighting some of the things that we have coming on the horizon. I am passing out sort of an overview sheet of the school security grant. The school security competitive grant program; we applied for the grant in December and I think we were skeptical on whether or not we would get it, but we thought it would be good to apply. These are state funds that, as a district, we have received in the past; this is highlighting some of the things that we have put on the grant. Access control improvements at John Trumbull, additional security cameras at John Trumbull, and an increase in the number of two-way radios at John Trumbull. At Swift, adding an additional panic alarm button, additional communication station, auxiliary office window protective film, more security cameras, and concrete barriers at the exterior by the cafeteria. At the high school in 2017, we did some work with the two-way radios improvements. The way that this grant money works is that you can retroactively cover some expenses that were budgeted for previously; we want to increase the number of exterior cameras that we have and increasing the number of exterior cameras that we have at Judson, Polk and the High School and in addition, at Polk and Judson, increasing the number of two-way radios. That is a comprehensive list of the things on the grant. Some of the conversations are around prioritizing what we want to focus on first and we have been reviewing the school safety meeting we had with members of the fire department and police department to look at the thing we want to hone in on first. The discussion that we had in that meeting was around exterior cameras and making sure we are putting in some additional improvements in place to keep the perimeter of our buildings safe. We are also starting a relationship this year with a company called NaviGate Prepared. They are a virtual emergency preparedness company. You heard several of the things that Ms. Fekete talked about processes or things that we have in place with relationship to safety and going through the flip charts and all of those things; NaviGate Prepared will help us to take our safety plans and condense them into an app that is user friendly. It is only accessible to employees that we identify. It is secure and helps us to answer safety questions in real time. If you think about an evacuation drill, in the event of an emergency as a teacher, if I am exiting the building and I am in my classroom and I see a second grader on his way back to his classroom, I am going to pull that student in with me. Currently, there is no quick way to identify that teacher would get outside and see that the child is missing from the class and not know where that student is. That is just one of the tools of the app, along with that our staff can check in and notify the principal in quick time that all students are accounted for. It is taking the processes that we have in place already and amping them up by turning it into digital tools. One of the other things that I am excited about with this partnership; some of the ground work that they have been doing is doing 360 pictures of every room in every

building and they will have those pictures available to our first responders in the event of an emergency. So it is not just knowing where the rooms are, but knowing what is located inside of each room. They will also be helping us reshape the way we do safety training at each of our schools. In emergency situations, we hope people will rise to the occasion, but what actually happens is that people rise to their level of training. We want to make sure we are very intentional about the way we are training our staff and looking at partnering with NaviGate Prepare to engage us in some scenario based training with our partnership with the police department, doing some walking evacuation drills, to make sure we are ready in the event of an emergency.

I. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)

None

J. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No

Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair –No

Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – No

Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Mr. Thomas Lambert, Chair –Yes

The total of the added change orders regarding the municipal town hall building may now lengthen the project completion date into the month of November.

Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Robert Makowski, Chair – Yes

Tonight the Governance and Community Engagement Committee met and Dr. Harrison spoke about the District Improvement Plan and shared with us the results from the 2019 family survey. We talked about how to use analytics from Powerschool to identify the effectiveness and trends of district communication out to our parents. A common theme of the committee was continuing to find new ways to engage parents and Dr. Harrison shared his goal of creating a family resource center.

K. Communications - Secretary

None

L. Report from the Board Chair

No Report

M. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent

None

N. Future agenda Items and Board Members' Comments

None

O. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)

None

P. Executive Session (8:10 p.m.)

Agenda Item: P.1
Subject: To move into Executive Session

Motion Presented By: Mr. Makowski
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rinaldi

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chair, I move that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of a discussion regarding the Polk School Interim Principal Candidate and the Watertown Public School’s Safety Plan. Attending the Executive Session will be Dr. Rydell Harrison, Tom Lambert, Janelle Wilk, Rob Makowski, Diane Bristol, Josephine Rosa, Cindy Eastman and myself, Cathie Rinaldi.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion Passes

Q. Regular Session (8:45 p.m.)

Agenda Item: Q.1
Subject: Polk School Interim Principal Candidate

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rosa

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chair, I move that the Board appoint Paula Eshoo as the Interim Principal of Polk School, effective September 25th, 2019 at the per diem rate at step one of the Administrator’s Union Contract.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: Q.2
Subject: Watertown Public School's Safety Plan

Motion Presented By: Mr. Makowski
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Eastman

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chair, I move that the Board approve of the
Watertown Public School's Safety Plan

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

R. Adjournment

Agenda Item: R.1
Subject: To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Eastman
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rinaldi

Text of the Motion: Mr. Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Vote: Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board